

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9636

INFO AMCONSUL PALERMO

UNCLAS ROME 13922

DEPT FOR EUR/EX ONLY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AGAO, AMGT

SUBJECT: GAO REVIEW: U.S. CONSULATE FUNCTIONS, ORGANIZATION,
STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

REF: STATE 197257 AND MILLER/COLLINS TELECON AUGUST 25

HEREWITH IS RECENT EVALUATION ON THE NEED FOR AND THE CONTINUED
EXISTENCE OF THE POST AT PALERMO. REQUEST YOUR EARLY CONCURRENCE
BY SEPTEMBER 8 AT THE LATEST, IF POSSIBLE:

SICILY'S STRONG HISTORICAL AND FAMILY TIES WITH LARGE NUMBERS
OF ITALO-AMERICANS OF SICILIAN ORIGIN GIVE RISE TO A HEAVY CONSULAR
WORKLOAD. THE POST ALSO PERFORMS A VARIETY OF OTHER FUNCTIONS,
INCLUDING ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL REPORTING, AND IS
THE THIRD IMMIGRANT VISA ISSUING POST IN ITALY.

IN FY-75, THE POST PROCESSED 3,100 IV APPLICATIONS AND NEARLY
8,700 NIV'S. OTHER CONSULAR SERVICES ARE AT A SIMILARLY HIGH
LEVEL. THE CLOSING OF THIS POST COULD BE EXPECTED TO PROVOKE AN
ESPECIALLY SHARP PROTEST FROM LARGE NUMBERS OF SICILIAN-AMERICANS.
IN ADDITION, IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY HARD ON THE NEARLY 13,000
AMERICAN PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THE CONSULAR DISTRICT, WHO WOULD
BE SERIOUSLY INCONVENIENCED IF THEY HAD TO TRAVEL TO NAPLES --
600 MILES TO THE NORTH -- OR BEHOND FOR SERVICES RENDERED BY THE
CONSULATE GENERAL. THE US NAVY BASE AT SIGONELLA (950 MILITARY
PERSONNEL PLUS THEIR DEPENDENTS) WOULD ALSO BE AFFECTED, AS
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WOULD THE ESTIMATED 50,000 AMERICAN TOURISTS WHO VISIT THE ISLAND

EVERY YEAR.

CLOSING PALERMO WOULD LEAVE THE ISLAND AND ITS POPULATPON
OF FIVE MILLION -- TEN PER CENT OF ITALY'S TOTAL POPULATION --
WITHOUT US REPRESENTATION. IT WOULD NOT BE DESIRABLE TO TRANSFER
ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ELSEWHERE.BEAUDRY

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